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Interview with Ronald Kellam by Mike Richard

Summary Sheet and Transcript

Interviewee

Kellam, Ronald

Interviewer

Richard, Mike

Date

August 24, 1999

Place

Lewiston, Maine

ID Number

MOH 146

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Biographical Note

Ronald Kellam was born in Portland, Maine on October 21, 1928. His father, Robert Kellam, was a paperhanger and his mother, Freda Edith (Nelson) Kellam, raised their ten children. He grew up in a Democratic family, but they were not politically active. He served in the Army in Korea and attended Bates for one semester. He then joined the Navy for a year, but was discharged and attended Boston University Law School. He ran for State Legislature in 1958 after working as an attorney in Portland. He then ran for State Congress in 1962, 1966, and 1968. In 1968 and 1970 he ran for State Senate.

Scope and Content Note

Interview includes discussions of: family history; Portland, Maine history; Education Committee; the "Miranda" case; New England Board of Higher Education; Coffin versus Reed campaign; Maine Legislature 1958-1962 and 1968-1972; Muskie as a leader; the John F. Kennedy/Lyndon Johnson campaign; and the 1968 vice presidential campaign.

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Transcript

Mike Richard: The date is August 24th, 1999. We're here at the Muskie Archives at Bates College in Lewiston; interviewing is Mike Richard, and we're interviewing Ronald Kellam. And Mr. Kellam, could you please state your full name and spell it?

Ronald Kellam: It's Ronald Lloyd Kellam. K-E-L-L-A-M, is the last name spelling.

MR: And your date of birth, please?

RK: October 21st, 1928.

MR: And where were you born?

RK: Portland, Maine.

MR: So you've lived in the Portland area all of your life?

RK: Oh, just about, yeah, except for going off to school and the service I've lived in Portland. I live in South Portland now, (*unintelligible phrase*).

MR: Okay, and first of all let's talk a little bit about your family background. What were your parents' names?

RK: My father's name was Robert and my mother's name was Freda Edith Nelson, her last name was Nelson. And he was a paperhanger, and of course mother was a housewife, my mother had ten children altogether.

MR: And, actually could you spell your mother's name?

RK: It was Freda, F-R-E-D-A, and the last name was Nelson, N-E-L-S-O-N.

MR: Thanks. And so you had nine brothers and sisters, you said?

RK: Altogether, yeah.

MR: And where did you fit in there?

RK: I was the fifth from the top, yes, fifth. I have four older brothers, and they're all deceased now.

MR: And have any of your brothers or sisters grown up to be particularly interested in politics or involved in politics?

RK: No, I can't say they have, no. None of them's run for office, and none of them are in the legal profession.

MR: And what were your parents' political views?

RK: They didn't discuss politics too much, well, except they were Democrats, and so that's about it. My mother always said the first word I ever said was "Vote for Al Smith," so I don't know how true it was. But when I was a youngster he would have, of course Al Smith would have been running that year I guess. But I wasn't talking, when he was campaigning, I wasn't talking I'm sure then.

MR: So politics wasn't really a hot topic of discussion in your house.

RK: No, no, I wouldn't think so, but of course there's the Depression time. Most of my childhood was in the Depression and it's making a living, that sort of thing is what took all your time.

MR: So how was, what was life like in the Depression in the neighborhood you grew up in- in Portland? Like, what did you do for recreation?

RK: Yeah, we moved around, I lived in several places in Portland, but the part I always remember is when I was, say, about seven or eight years old. I went to, I lived on Smith Street right near the North School in the middle of town, and there was a, it's a large school, the building is large. Went to kindergarten through the eighth grade at that time and had quite a mix of people, you know, background, ethnic background was very mixed; a lot of Italian, still quite a few Italian in that area. Of course the school is not a school any more; it's a housing place now. And at the time I really enjoyed the North School and, can't think of too much of a distinction there. I know we had the WPA come in and paint murals on the wall, and we used to have an orchestra. I don't know how that was financed, but it was through the WPA project (*unintelligible phrase*) work program. And after the North School, I got through in, what, '42, and then went on to Portland High School, which was fairly close by also. At that time we were living in what we call the Bayside section of Portland, which is practically all wiped out now with commercial developments, and there's some housing projects. I don't think there's any house that I ever lived in that's still standing.

MR: What was, in some of the neighborhoods that you remember, what was your family's economic situation like, especially during the Depression when compared to some of the other families?

RK: Oh, we weren't any worse off than anybody else. They were all in bad shape. But I just remember it was sort of hand to mouth all through the '30s, I think. So, but we didn't have, we got by all right, we were fine. We didn't have, you know, we didn't have central heat or hot running water or things like that, but, there is just sort of an (*unintelligible phrase*) for the neighborhood when we lived probably two or three blocks from there. But the main recreation I think would have been something like that, the Boys' Clubs, the schools.

Of course you're talking about a time when there was no television, and radio wasn't all that great. So, you know, we used to slide on the hill out in front of the street, we had a snow, and they used to close the street in the wintertime, we could slide. Walk, hike I guess. But it mostly just centered around the Boys Club really.

MR: And what were some of your interests in school, either academically or in clubs or groups or sports that you had?

RK: Well, I didn't play any sports in school. I had rheumatic fever when I was nine years old, it kind of slowed me down a lot. I had kind of a leaky valve so I didn't, but over the years I've overcome that, I mean I'm in pretty good health now, but, can't think of much for clubs at school. I enjoyed going to school in the sense as much as anyone does. I mean, I liked the, the learning process was fun, and some of the teachers I can remember very well, were very nice teachers, some of them a bit tough. Funny thing about teachers, they always think better of you thirty years later than they did when you was in school, you know. Used to meet them on the street, and they'd say, "Oh, gee we're so proud of you Ronald and always, I liked you so much." And I keep thinking, you didn't say that to me when I was in school.

But, I got along good, I got along well in school, never had any trouble, and I never worried about grades in school. And high school I got through in '42. Those were sort of hectic times, and, I mean grade school, eighth grade. We spent most of the war years in high school. Of course that was, in Portland at that time, it was a big change. As soon as the shipyard come in about 1940, tremendous growth in the city as far as numbers of people. And then, of course, the Navy had more people coming ashore; there were a lot more sailors around. And I worked on the shipyard for a while in the cafeteria. It was a pretty big place (*unintelligible word*) and different than, much more hectic, let me put it that way. But for recreation in the '30s you might walk up street, up the town, and if lucky get ten cents worth of peanuts at the Fanny Farmer's or whatever the name of the place is, the little peanut shops they used to have, nothing particularly spectacular. I never joined the Boys' Club, I mean the Boy Scouts, things like that. But the Portland Boys' Club was a big event, they always had a . . . They had a big swimming team; they had really, they've got some nationally recognized swimmers from all over, and a good basketball team. So, I spent a lot of time in the Boys Club. It was warm, too, which helps in the winter time.

MR: You mentioned earlier that at least the high school was pretty diverse ethnically, there were many different (*unintelligible word*).

RK: Well, where I went, yes. Well see, like the North School was- the majority of the North School was Italian. That was the grade, elementary junior high type classification. And it was the same in high school; they had, I don't know what the population, the student enrollment in Portland High School was at that time, but it was probably certainly over fifteen hundred, or it might be eighteen hundred or so. That's just a guess, I mean it was crowded.

MR: Were there any tensions between ethnic groups that you noticed, any incidents of prejudice?

RK: No, not with me anyway. We had, the Irish kids went to the Cathedral grade school; we used to walk right by there to the North School. And so, I don't know if it was all Irish or not but it seemed to me that there was, they attended the parochial school. I would guess that primarily it would be, well, we had a lot of Hebrew Jewish people. I knew a lot of kids that went

to the Hebrew school afterwards. You know, they used to have their own school building on Pearl Street and had lessons in the afternoon; Hebrew I guess, language and religion I suppose. But, I never noticed that much of a prob- People weren't so sensitive in those days, I don't think. (*Unintelligible phrase*) quite so much and, but see, you got a lot more troubles. When you're having trouble finding enough to eat, you, a lot of these other things don't amount to so much. And as things get better and better, people get pickier and pickier about things. So, I think a lot of the problems today, if it was Depression time you wouldn't have those problems now either. They'd still be there, but you'd be thinking about something else.

MR: And what were your parents' religious beliefs?

RK: They were Protestant, not particularly, well (*unintelligible phrase*) Congregationalists, let me put it that way. And when I was a little tiny child we were going to St. Lawrence Congregational Church. I was five or six years old. It's up on Munjoy Hill; we were living up there then, but it's always been Congregational. I go to, I've been going with this church here, Congregational church, for, ever since '40s, early '40s.

MR: And was the Congregational church in Portland, was it a large congregation? Was it important to that area, was it influential?

RK: Oh, I think so, yeah. I didn't have too much to get involved with it after that, but I would think so, yes. This, the one about St. Lawrence is being redeveloped. That building is, you know, fell in disrepair, a big granite building. I think Woodford's Congregational church is one of the largest in the state. Not too sure of that now, but I think it is. Of course as you get older things change. I don't go to church as much now as I used to.

MR: And you mentioned your parents were registered as Democrats.

RK: Yeah, I would say so. Never talked too much about the, except, of course Roosevelt would have been the big name when I was young. And, he's all I remembered for, for all my life up until he died. You've got this long span of time when he was the only one. But they'd be Democrats insomuch, but they did not carry signs or anything like that. I think I'm the first person from there to run for office.

MR: And, this would be kind of early in your childhood, if you'd have recollections of, but maybe do you know what the, what the political registration of much of the area was like? Was it predominantly either Democratic or Republican in the neighborhood (*unintelligible phrase*)?

RK: The area we lived in would be undoubtedly, I think, Democratic, but the city as a whole would be Republican. The city of Portland was, really didn't become Democratic until late '50s. I think the '58 election was the first time we carried all the legislative seats from Portland. Fifty-six, we got six out of seven, and before that (*unintelligible word*), no, yeah, '50, that's right. Sixty we dropped back; we lost seats in '60. And I always recall the administration of the city as being Republican. This is non-partisan, supposedly, it was a, you have a non-political or apolitical type elections in the city council, but the, it would be the same people who were Republicans.

MR: And just to ask you a general question about the city and how it's changed over the years, what would you say to that? Maybe some areas are politically or economically and socially?

RK: The change has been mostly like, say, since the late '50s, early '60s or so. Of course I live in South Portland now; I'm right across the town line by the mall. I moved over there ten years ago, well, a little more than that. But, actually once I, I went on the court in 196-, the beginning of '74, and I never involved myself from then on with local politics. But the changes have been pronounced. My theory would be that if you keep moving people out of town, the ones that are left are mighty different than the ones that were there before. I think what happened to Portland, and probably South Portland too, to some extent, lesser extent, is they keep opening up residential areas in Windham, Standish, and Gorham and so forth, people move out. The ones that are left are different than the ones that left. It's been intensified, the Democrats taking over.

I think probably one of the main reason Democrats have done so well is that they had a chance. Certain worry about, in politics, about the political party different than the one that's been in power. And I think when the Democrats did take over, demonstrated they'd do a good job, it's a lot easier the next time. That's the really big thing about Ed Muskie getting to be governor in '54, is that you got a few more people in '56 and '58 were doing real well, it's a building process. But you have to establish confidence with your voters and want to get them to vote for you. But the city of Portland right now is, I don't know what the enrollment is really, but it's, certainly it's, they're not going to elect any Republicans (*to the state legislature soon, or any*, more than just the one or two that they had in their pockets. I guess that's what the change is. But as I say, it's primarily the movement of people; I don't think the people themselves change their opinion about things.

MR: And how would you say maybe from an economic standpoint Portland has changed over the years?

RK: It's very much service oriented, I would say. There's certainly a lot more money, getting a lot of higher paid jobs. Well, we've lost some good places, like the American Can Company closed up and left; they manufactured things. But they have semi-conductors, electronic type places there that probably pay more; Insurance companies, banks, regional things. I don't think Portland ever did have large manufacturing particularly, but we did have some. And I don't even- I can't even think of a big firm but there must be someone there, but I can't even think of one now. But you certainly have the companies like Union Mutual, or UNUM, whatever they call themselves today, has- has certainly done very well, they're bigger and bigger. The banks are bigger. That, national semi conductor is a huge place; it's just across the line in South Portland, but it's, you can hardly differentiate between places like that.

MR: And, so after, getting back to your time in high school and afterwards, after you graduated in '42 you went into the service you said?

RK: No, no, I graduated from the North School, which is the grade school, the elementary school, eighth grade in '42, and then I went to high school until '46, Portland High School. And

when I got through high school I went into the Army for a couple of years.

MR: And where did you serve for the Army?

RK: I served in Korea most of the time. In '4-, I got there at the end of '46 and stayed through the middle of the war, '48. I spent most, I had a two-year hitch, and most of it was spent there.

MR: And then after that what did you do?

RK: I came back and went to school. I went to Bates for a semester and I had decided at that time to go to law school, which I could do without going any more than two years. In fact, you could go to law school at that time without going to college at all if you had been a service man. But I did, I put in, well, would be something over two years, then I went to BU [Boston University] Law School. I took a break before I went to law school; I was in the Navy for a year. I went back to service in 1950, so I started law school in 1951.

MR: Were there any particular incidents or factors that contributed to your being interested in law?

RK: Well, I had thought of it through high school, and I pretty much decided that's what I was going to do. I never made any changes in plans; I just, I had a nice teacher for, J. Weston Walsh was the teacher in commercial laws in high school. And I had decided by that time it's what I would like to do, and he encouraged me. And (*unintelligible phrase*).

MR: And what was your semester at Bates like?

RK: Oh fine, fine, it was good. But I was always having trouble with money and everything, and I just didn't think it was worth it really. I mean, the cost, and I was having other problems so I figured, well, I'm not going to stay anyway. Because I had the G.I. Bill, I didn't want to use it up. See, I had four years of school and I didn't want to spend the four years here and have none left, so. I could get into Boston University Law School by transferring. I actually went to BU in the summer time and then trans-, got into law school after I was there.

MR: And what made you decide BU?

RK: At Boston University? Well, it just seemed like a, just talked to people, and so on. It's the only law school I applied to and I just- it's a very good school, and it was something I could probably handle. I think that, I assumed they would take me (*unintelligible phrase*). I wanted to go to the one in town. I could have gone to the University of Maine, of course, what was the University of Maine at that time. But that was in Portland, I didn't- I just figured I'd do better down there.

MR: And were there any professors or groups down there that particularly influenced you somehow?

RK: No, they were all very good. I can't say they, I didn't take off in a particular direction

because of any of the people that were teaching. Most lawyers at that time were generalist anyway. I don't know if they still are or not, but the, you'd have to get, a person who has no basis in law and doesn't have any relatives that are lawyers or anything like that, he's really got to learn a lot about everything and hope that he can find a spot. Other people who are sons of lawyers, they usually get direction toward a certain area that the parents are practicing. And so, I didn't have any of that; I didn't know any lawyers. When I got through law school I just rode up to a bunch of lawyers in town, in Portland, and had some inkling that they might have spaces, you know, whatever, some kind of arrangement, and I wasn't even going to come back at all except I had this fellow named Walter Murrell offered me a spot, offered me an office space. And so I thought, well, I think I'll take that. I think that was, if I hadn't gotten that spot, I probably would have stayed in Boston. I was working in an insurance company all the time I was in law school, for part of it, and I could have stayed there at the, in the claims department. So I, that's how I happened to come back to Portland, and I stayed with, stayed with him for, oh, fifteen years or so, I don't know, can't remember now how long it's been, probably about '50.

MR: So until about the early '70s or so you practiced there?

RK: Yeah, late '60s, I went to, but I, you practiced alone, most of the lawyers in Maine, in fact I wouldn't be surprised if there still are pretty much sole practitioners in a, within a group. But, you do have more and more specialization. And of course the law business now is a lot of machinery, a lot of equipment, a lot of overhead. So, but I'm really, haven't had much experience with it, you see, I went on the court in '74, and that's over twenty-five years ago now. I've been retired for ten, eleven years, so I served fifteen years in court. So I'm pretty much out of the law business, I don't know what they do today.

MR: And while you were practicing, who were some of the other lawyers or maybe people in the political or legal scene in Portland that you got to know or work with?

RK: People I used to see fairly regularly, anybody who ran for office of course. Cappy Tevanian was up the street from me. He was a Democrat, he ran for the legislature. Casper Tevanian; he'd be well known by most Democrats. Of course Joe Brennan started out with Casper Tevanian. Sid Wernick was downstairs from me in the same building. A fellow in the same office was Walter Murrow and Alton Thompson; Alton Thompson's been dead for thirty years almost now. There was Jack Fitzgerald across the hall, Bob Wilson, but these people are all gone. Frank Sterns was, became a district attorney, he's working, Frank Sterns is still around. He's not practicing, I don't think. Franklin, his name was Franklin Sterns, and as far as singling out people, kind of hard to remember just offhand.

MR: Okay, so, and what type of law did you practice, was it just general practicing?

RK: Well, we did general practice. I did some criminal, some accident cases, a bit of probate. Probably did more probate than, numerically, you know, than other things, but did a lot of criminal trials. And, you know, you get (*unintelligible phrase*) once in a while, that sort of thing, people get divorced. The thing about practicing law when you're not set into it, you know, by inheritance, you're going to get business from the people who have business. You're not going to get bankers. You'll get, everybody can get divorced, and anybody can get run into by a car.

You know, the basis for the practice is going to have to be people who are either acquainted with you or become knowledgeable of you, and if you happen to luck out and have a criminal case that turns out real well, then you'll get a lot of criminal cases, things like that.

That's how people usually fall into different categories, they, once they start out on their own, they don't decide they're going to make a certain category, I don't think. I think they- things are easy. Some are easier than others. And now with the more passage of time and the rules of procedure being so, hard work as far as preparing paperwork, we're a paper society today which we, of course, we weren't thirty, forty years ago. So most people, I think, probably even today will take what they can get. That's the way it was when I started practice, most everyone I knew never turned anything down. If you got a case that you didn't like, or you didn't do much of, you could get someone else to do it for you, you know, just (*unintelligible phrase*), if I'm associated with someone who did just that. I knew a lawyer across the hall did nothing but accident cases, so if I had a, one that I really didn't want to have to do all the paperwork on, I could get him to come in with me.

MR: Okay. In '58 you ran and won the seat in the state legislature.

RK: Yeah, first time I ran for office was in '58. I was going to run in '56, and I kept talking it back and forth; I remember Casper Tevanian ran from Portland. We'd never won in Portland before that time, but of course it was, the feelings were good. And I had planned to run, but I talked myself out of it, that, well, I don't know, if I run I've got to spend a little bit of money on ads, I got to get out and campaign, I don't want to look like the worst one in the world running. And, but they did do well, and they took six out of the seven Portland seats that year.

And the next year, of course, I ran the next time, in '58, and the Democrats won all, they used to vote at large at that time, so we ran as a, you vote for all seven. So we got all seven seats that time which was, that was a good year. It was a, no state election, no federal election at the same time; that was the last September election. You had the trouble with the tourists, being summer time, most of the time you were running. But the other side of it was you would not, no problem with the national, obscurity, you know, you at least had a chance to. If you said something, you know, someone might listen someplace. But it was a very good year for us, Clauson won the governorship that year, he was the first four-year governor. And of course Ed Muskie was on the top of the ticket, so we had a lot of opportunities. We felt good about it and it did come out good. We didn't carry the state legislature, but we certainly did better than we ever did before. I think we had fifty-eight members that year out of a hundred and fifty-one. So, and then of course the next time we fell back in '60. But, so what I remember about that '58 election was that basically things were going well for us.

People just had a good feel about it, and Ed Muskie campaigned hard for everybody. He came down through Portland a lot, and of course it gave you an element of prestige if you had a meeting and people were going to make a speech, at least someone might come. And so, and no one's going to go across the street to listen to me, you know, I was just, running for the first time, so you really need a, someone there to draw the crowd and give some credibility (*unintelligible phrase*). But anyway, that was probably the, I think that was the most enjoyable election we had, if you can call it that.

MR: And, actually, did you run again in 1960?

RK: I ran in '60, and '60 was the year that we had the big landslide for Nixon. I got something under ten thousand votes, ninety-eight hundred, I think, (*unintelligible phrase*) in 1958, and won handily. The next year, or two years later, 1960, I got five thousand votes more and lost on the initial count. I got fifty percent more votes and still I was short changed in the beginning, on the initial count. And then we went through a recount, and I picked up, I don't know, two or three hundred votes, I forget what it was now. But I think I went from a hundred and thirty behind to a hundred and something ahead. It was quite an experience. I think that was first successful recount there was, but I had looked through the, of course there was a huge vote, and looking through the counts on the voting, you could see where there seemed to be discrepancies in some place and, which was true enough.

They used to have straight ballot voting in those days, of course, and they'd put a couple of piles of straight (*unintelligible word*) counting somebody else, or they didn't count them at all, one or the other. But in any event, on the recount I won very easily, but it took about a month or so to get seated. But that was 1960, that was the worst we did. In '62 I didn't run in. I ran for the primaries in '62, but then I switched over. I had my, a friend of mine named Tom Maynard, and Tom was a, I think the Maynards are all gone; I don't think his wife is alive any more either. But Tom died after the, Tom Maynard had run in the primaries for congress and he got the nomination, but he had a heart attack right after the primaries were over. And we had a committee, well, I guess they still have committees, that select successors, and I got to be selected as the congressional candidate. So I dropped out of the house race, you know the state legislature race, and ran for congress. And of course I didn't do all that well, but I had the toughest candidate. Nobody else did that well either; we didn't get the governorship that year or the other congress seats or, from that standpoint I guess I didn't do all that well, but I didn't do any worse. And I've always been very grateful to Ed Muskie for that because he helped me a lot in that campaign. Because when you come in like that and the other person's favored by a great deal, your support just wanes, you know, you really got to look like a winner to have people follow you in this business. And I know we had some TV time that was organized by the Democratic Party through Ed, and he got me some support. I was always very grateful for that. But, in any event, that's the reason I wasn't in the legislature in '62. I went back in '68.

MR: Who did you run against in the '62?

RK: Stan Tupper, Stan Tupper was a very popular person, and if Peter Garland had been the candidate, and he was almost the candidate. Tupper actually dropped out in the springtime and then come back in when Garland decided he couldn't run, or couldn't run effectively. So he became the candidate. He, we actually had a primary contest, but he became the candidate. Stan Tupper's a very, very good man, I see him once in a while now still. And he's a very likeable person, hard person to run against. But, and he won very handily.

MR: Let's talk about your time in the legislature in '58 and '59, in that term. What were some of the, well who were some of the people, the other legislators that you worked closely with, either in the Democratic (*unintelligible phrase*)?

RK: Well, we had, Lucia Cormier was the, was our leader that year, and she's very capable, a very capable person. And, let's see, we didn't have many lawyers, didn't have many lawyers. I was on the legal affairs committee, but, first I wanted to be on the judiciary committee, but we didn't have the openings for it. We didn't have much control. Joe Edgar [?], the Republican, was the speaker and we had just so many seats. But afterwards I preferred to be on the legal affairs. It's funny how things work out that way, you think you want something and really if you just relax and take what you've got, many times you're just happier.

The legal affairs committee is different today than it was then. We used to handle all the charter changes in the state, now we have the home rule, see, when I was up there ten years later we had home rule. The nature of the committee's changed. But it used to be, everybody in the state, every little town, come in before that committee. So you got to see a lot of people, you got to meet a lot of, you know, you (*unintelligible phrase*) with all the planning type problems and the city charter problems, sewer districts, whatever, you know, so you got to learn a lot about the state. And, so I was quite satisfied there in that committee after I got on. And, let's see, that session we had, we were only paid twelve hundred bucks a year I think, or fourteen, I'm not sure. It was, for the session, you know, two years, didn't pay much.

And the legislators from Portland were Bing Miller, who is now gone, a quite colorful, quite good. Arnold Briggs, Mimi Russell. . . . Miss Russell and I used to rent a room on Green Street. It's about four, five blocks from the State House, and could stay up over the week and come down. It's very difficult for a lawyer to do that, you know, the legislature has always been very hard for attorneys, even today it must be hard. Because you've got to try to maintain practice, and the people who you're working for don't care that you're in the legislature; they want you to do their work. So you spend a lot of time trying to, you know, tread water in your own business, and still do the job that you're elected to.

But I remember that session as being one of the, I think one thing is you had Clint Clauson and had enough people to sustain vetoes, you know, you couldn't override the majority anyway, but we had enough to at least sustain a veto. And like I say, Lucia was the leader. I think they asked about Louis Jalbert, Louis Jalbert was there at that time, Louis Jalbert was there quite some time. Jalbert was very knowledgeable in state government, the financial arrangements of state government, very, very knowledgeable, and so he was quite, and quite colorful. The only problem with Louis is he always seemed like he had own agenda on things and we had to keep that in mind. But that's the way it is with politicians anyway. You know, we are thinking about other things, or you know, making moves down the road and that sort of thing. Let's see, the big problem about that time would be, it was just money. The state was in tough shape. That was the year we extended the sales tax to lodgings, which was kind of hard to do with some of the, people from resort communities don't want to have sales tax on room rentals. And I think that's the only way to balanced the budget was by putting it on the lodgings. But the dollars involved was nothing that it is today, nothing at all. I don't know what the, I don't keep track of the budget anymore, you know, state government, but certainly it was, the entire state would be less than some of the departments today.

MR: Okay, and, well let's see, so after that you spent one term in the legislature, and then after

that time you were, you ran again in '60 and then for congress in '62, and then -

RK: Yeah, I had two sessions in the house. Now, see, 1960 we had quite a beating, we got really drubbed [?] in 1960. And the only thing that held together there, I don't know, I forget how many we had; I think the number of seats we had was in the thirties even, the second, next time around, in 1960. It was kind of hard, I don't remember how many we had, but anyway, it was a very tough time for us. And not only that, you had reapportionment. That was the year that the, you know, I was trying to think of how they reapportioned the thing, see, '60 was when they reapportioned the congressional seats, and they put Stan Tupper in with Peter Garland. And then the next year was the time that I was running as- because they had to run against each other or else one drop out.

But the Republicans did their reapportionment, that's why today they still have it the same way with, you know, Androscoggin County all the way up into Aroostook, that's kind of a ridiculous situation. But the Repub-, the Democrats really had no say in the reapportionment. It makes a big difference on those years when the census comes in, how the seats are going to be rearranged.

MR: And then the next office you ran for after '62, was that '68 for the state senate (*unintelligible phrase*)?

RK: I ran in '62 for congress. I sat out until, yeah, I toyed with the idea of running again in '64, but I couldn't swing it financially, and that would have been the time to run because we won that year. But anyway, I might not have got nominated, but I didn't run again until they reapportioned the state senate into districts. We used to have counties, county wide voting. Yeah, so, when they had the county wide voting, you'd have Cumberland County as a group, so they generally all went one way. You'd have, you know, all four, they had four then, all four might be Republican. And in the county wide voting the Democrats could carry York sometimes, they'd carry Androscoggin all the time. Other than that there was no safe places for Democrats running for county wide in the state senate, so '68 was the first year after the reapportionment. We had thirty-two members, and Portland had two and part of a third one, and we just lucked out on that year because that was the year that Ed Muskie was on the ballot for vice president. And so we took all three of those seats, the Democrats did in Portland.

The person I beat for the senate was an incumbent, he was quite heavily favored. But still I think it was, really it was just, having Ed Muskie on the ballot's what made the difference, I think, at least in the Portland area. And so I went in the senate that year and then went back two years later, let's see, that's '68 and '70 I was in the state senate. And '72 I didn't, in '72 I ran for district attorney and didn't make it, and then I went on the court. I was, by '72, I was considering trying to get a judicial appointment, and as it happens in the state government, you can't be appointed to a job that you set the pay for. That's constitutional; at least I believe it's in the constitution. It's certainly- it's in the statutes at least. So the only way to get appointed to the court was not to run again, so I didn't run then, I mean run for the senate, I ran for the local district job. And, as I say, when I went on the, Governor Curtis put me on, you know, on the court. So I, I was quite diligent about that after; you're really prohibited from political activity in the judicial position. You can't become an enemy (*unintelligible word*). . . .

End of Side A, Tape One
Side B, Tape One

MR: This is the second side of the tape of the interview with Ronald Kellam on August 24th, 1999. And now, in '68 when you ran for the senate, the state senate the first time, who was the incumbent that you mentioned you ran against?

RK: Mitchell Culp, Mitchell Culp was that. See, he was elected by the county; it was a county wide election for him. And whereas when I ran the district I had was just around the boulevard of Portland. I lived on Brighton Avenue, and the district just sort of swung around the Back Cove. And the Peninsula section was one district and this was a district, and then North Deering was in with Westbrook. Gorham I think. But there was three seats, or two and a half seats in Portland, for the senate and that was out of thirty two.

But see, ordinarily, the year before, the election before that, it had been county wide and then of course you'd either get all or none. You'd get, far better to have the districts. Of course they have districts now in the legislative seats in Portland, too. And Portland's wiped out the seven members, we used to have to have only, old constitution called for only seven at the most for each town, and so Portland was restricted to seven seats. They were actually entitled to eleven, you know, by population. But now I think they have ten. I'm not completely sure of that either, but I'm pretty sure they still have ten. But the district I ran from was residential, and I guess that was the boulevard section, there was quite a few Republicans there. And Mitchell was a homebuilder and a good, you know, a good candidate, but I don't attribute it as much to me as I do to the ticket itself. You got to have a tide going your way to be successful in politics; you can't buck the whole thing. You got to do something yourself, but it's very difficult to get elected, really, you know, all the nice, the, the good candidates that don't get elected because they're just, the tide's against them, they can only fight this so much on their own.

MR: And so what was your time in the senate in '68 and '70 like, what were some of the committees and the people you worked with?

RK: Very good, very good, very good. I was on the education committee one session. We did a lot to increase the school aid. In order to improve school subsidies, you've got to, there's a practical matter to protect the people that are already there, so the only way you can do much good is to get more money, you know. You've got to add to the formula, and that's still the case I'm sure. And at that time we did quite a lot of work on the state school subsidy. Ken Curtis was governor, and he had proposals on that. And we fought on the education right up to the last day, I think. I say the last day, at least to the end of the session, the Republicans and the Democrats on there. Republicans were in the majority, but not by a great deal, and so, anyway, we went to the very end of it. Put quite a bit of money into the school subsidies, and that really is the only way you can balance out or make changes because the people that are already getting a certain amount of money aren't going to vote to get less, so it's just practical politics that you've got to add to it. We had a long session there. And I spent most of my time on that kind of bills, education bills. And my second session in the state senate I spent most of it on highway department, transportation matters.

I worked for trying to abolish the State Turnpike Authority, not so much abolish it, but get them to change the system of toll collection, open the road up. And that's what they're doing today. You know, these changes you get in the Maine Turnpike Authority now were really already advocated thirty years ago. But of course they got to pay the bills. Turnpike had been paid off by the early '70s, it's a cash cow, they aren't going to ever abolish the turnpike because there's so much money in it. But they have opened the road up, they're doing that and have the expectation is that somebody'll keep on doing it. Get rid of some of the gates, you know, open up the access to the road. So I spent a lot of time on that during my second session. Most people, if you get into a particular position, you try to get something you want to do, you know, that you're really interested in, and in addition to that you can develop interest in things just by the fact that you are exposed to it. And you try to make it a little better when you leave than when you came in. That's what it comes down to, (*unintelligible phrase*).

MR: And who were some of the people, either in the Democratic Party that you worked closely with, or in the Republican Party that you dealt with in the senate?

RK: Well, the senate was more so, of course it was a smaller group, so, and the committee, there was only three members of each committee from the senate; you'd get into it more (there's no question about that), and you got better control over the movement of the bills because there's fewer people there, they can be a little bit more accommodating. I think the person I dealt with the most the first session would be, as far as the committee work, would be with [Bennett] Ben Katz, who was the chairman of the education committee, and he and I had opposite views of most things but, nevertheless, got by and eventually come up with pretty good legislation. The senate president that year was Ken MacLeod from Bangor, awful nice man.

And the Democrat leaders were Carlton Reed, Bud Reed from Woolwich, that was the majority, or the minority leader, and the senators, the other one from Portland was Gerry Conley. And he was, I see him all the time, he's the only person I feel see all, I've known him for fifty years or more. (*Unintelligible word*) Gerard Peters, he became senate president later on. And, let's see, Catherine Carswell, Kitty Carswell was a senator from Portland; she sat with me. Who else was it in that session? I think most of them are gone now.

Joe Sewall, from. . . . That was a Republican, very high class person. David Graham was the Democratic senator from Brunswick area, or not Brunswick but Freeport. I know he's gone now; he was a very, very capable person. And, let's see, Peter Danton is still around, he's from Old Orchard or Saco. Can't think of who else was, that would still be alive, most of them aren't alive anymore. I think, I think Ken MacLeod was the senate president in both sessions I was there, but it might have been, Joe Sewall came in. Maybe Joe Sewall was president afterwards, but I'm not so sure, Joe Sewall. Getting older now, see, I'm almost seventy-one so I'm getting old, I don't remember things quite so well.

MR: That's okay. I have a terrible memory, so. . . .

RK: Have a hard time putting a face to the particular year, you know.

MR: Well actually, let's talk a little bit about Gerry Conley, especially as someone who you've known very well for fifty years. How would you, what do you have to say about him, maybe on a personal level, professional level?

RK: Oh, well, I like Gerry very much. He was a, I met him in the '40s sometime there, I don't know. But he worked for the railroad, and he worked out of state for a while. Then he, in the late '50s he started to run for office. I'm trying to think of the first one. I think he went in the house the first time in '64, and that was the year I was not there. In '64 they took over, the Democrats controlled the legislature in '64, and, well the '64 election, you know, 1965. And so he did very well, he was in the house quite a few, I think Gerry Conley's probably got as much time as anybody up there in recent history. He was in the house right up in the time in '68 when they reapportioned the senate, and he was the first one to run from the peninsula section. He ran the same time I did for the senate, and I believe he stayed right there until well into the '80s, I'm not too sure when his time began. I guess it was '68, and he must have, he must have twenty years in the legislature all together. And then he left the senate, became chairman of the employment security commission I believe it's called, the exact title I'm not too sure, had to do with the appeals of the people who were denied unemployment compensation. And he spent I guess, six or eight years at that. So he's been in state government a lot.

And the thing about Gerry Conley is he worked on the railroad full time all the time he was there, he rode back and forth to work nights. And had thirteen children, twelve, he had twelve that survived. But he had all these children, only a great father, good provider, you know what I mean, has a job like that. I think anyone who could, you know, go in the legislature all day and then commute down to Portland and work most of the night. He'd work the weekend nights of course and things like that, and have some nights off, but he worked practically forty; it probably was a full time job. And then of course he became senate president; that was after I left. I think he stayed senate president quite a while; right up until the time he didn't run any more. He gave up the seat. Matter of fact his son got the same seat afterwards, his, Gerard P. Conley, Jr., yeah, junior, didn't have to change the name tags even. He's not there either now. But I see, Gerry Conley is register of probate in Cumberland County now. He ran for that just to be agreeable really, eight years ago now, no, six years ago. So he's been the judge of probate, I mean the register of probate for quite a while. It's his- I think eight years ago next year so, they have a four year term of office. But I see him all the time for lunch, you know, at least once a week. In fact I talked with him today. His brother died this morning, he has a brother who died this morning. He's been in the hospital. So, I usually see him for lunch on Monday but couldn't hang around the hospital yesterday. But he's an interesting person, very hard worker.

MR: And also Casper Tevanian is a name you've mentioned a lot.

RK: Oh, Casper, yeah, Casper was a great, Tevanian was a lawyer, he was practicing when I came, passed the Bar. In fact Tevanians had a store down on Oxford Street when I was a kid, you know, six years old, eight years old. And a regular at the Boy's Club, so I've known some of the Tevanians for a long, long time. Never saw them particularly after, but, when I came back to Portland and started to practice law, he was up the street from me. And he ran for the, he was in the legislature in '56.

I was going to run; he was talking about running, and I said, “Yeah, I think I probably will, but on the other hand I’ve got to, got to go out and campaign some and I’m just barely making a living as it is, and so. But I kept thinking about it, and if I didn’t do it- they were trying to fill the ticket up at that time and so if I hadn’t run that year, I always kick myself for not doing it. That’s why I figured after that is that you really ought to do what you want to do and don’t worry about little details and things, you know. You’ll never get to do what you want if you don’t do it, so the next time I decided, next time I decided. . . . about running. And Casper was a good lawyer, he died really young, died of cancer I’m quite sure. He was quite young when he died. But he did mostly criminal work, very colorful person. And he kind of lucked out in the sense that the Miranda case came along and chance of the, the emphasis now being on protection of people charged with crime, and usually a chance to bring criminal cases where you’d have a few things on your side. And I think those cases there that. . . . helped him a lot in the sense of being able to defend criminals, or people charged with crime, and get some of them off. So he became quite a celebrity that way, and as I say, he was, I’m not sure as he was here more than one session in the legislature, but an awful good man.

MR: Well, I just have a short list of people involved in Portland politics that you might have gotten to know over the years, and I’m just asking for kind of impressions of them personally and professionally, any anecdotes you’ve got, or, okay, first one is Harold Loring.

RK: Yeah, I knew Harold very well. Harold was a city councilor for quite some time, and awful nice fellow, good man. Of course Harold Loring is the brother of the person in the (*unintelligible word*) that they named Loring Air Base after. And he was in the council, he was (*unintelligible word*) on the city council sometimes in the ‘60s I think. He’s not a person I would see every day or anything like that, but at least I, you know, very, very highly respected, he was respected by everybody. Loring was a very well respected person.

MR: And how about Wallace Campbell?

RK: Yeah, Wally was quite a fellow. Wally was a football player in high school, I didn’t know him then, of course; he was a few years ahead of me in school. But he got into, he’s a lawyer, of course. I believe he went to a local law school, the University of Maine, and became a South Portland judge under Muskie. I wouldn’t be surprised if he worked with the OPS (*unintelligible word*) when Muskie was head of it. I’m not too sure about that, but I wouldn’t be surprised if he did. Wally was a very capable person and a good ball player. And the few business I had with him was certainly quite agreeable. Wally Campbell is the father of this Steve Campbell who writes the Sunday political column for the Gannett Publishing, or whatever they call the *Gannet* paper now. I saw his widow one time about four or five years ago, and she introduced herself to me, I didn’t know her at the time. But I hadn’t seen, of course Campbell, I don’t know, can’t remember when he died now, but it’s been quite some time, been quite a while. But Wally was quite likeable, I mean, I really (*unintelligible phrase*). He was more like one of us, you know.

MR: And what about Clyde Bartlett?

RK: Yeah, Clyde was the schoolteacher in Portland. Clyde’s the fellow who ran for congress against Tom Maynard; he’s the fellow that lost out on that nomination in ‘62. But he was the

teacher, principal, West School, and he was county chairman. He was from South Portland. Very active person and very good at spinning a story, I mean, he could do a great job on, I thought, on press releases and things like that; Quite capable. I think Clyde actually (*unintelligible phrase*), I'm not too sure of that, I didn't see him after. I never saw him again, not too much, I don't think, after the mid '60s anyway. But he was a very capable person, but he's been gone quite a while, I think.

MR: And how about Ralph Imergen?

RK: Ralph Imergen was a city councilor. He ran, I ran for city council one time and lost and, Ralph won that year. It was in the '50s. Ralph was the son of Imergen, Nazie Imergen (I think his name was Nazie), there is a Nazie Nazareth, who was very Jewish, in my class in high school, and Ralph would three or four years older than that. But their father ran a grocery store down on Mail Street about a block from where I used to live as a kid, so I knew the family. And Ralph became, well he had an appliance store, I know, one time, and they were in the grocery business when they were young, and, a very nice guy. But he ran- he got on the city council. He ran more than once; I can't remember now just when it would be. He would have been- he would have gotten elected in the '50s sometime I think in the city council in Portland. And that was the, sort of the break when he got in. He got into the city council before Ralph did, before Harold Loring, but before that, it was always the same people. You know, we used to call him the machine.

Funny how you talk, you sort of downgrade the opposition, but they were. This is non-partisan, but it was non-partisan Republican, that's how they used to, the city of Portland was always, the city council was always the same, but I think I can truthfully say, I think Ralph was the first one outside of the group. Another fellow named O'Brien who got in there, who was an outsider, but he was sort of outside of everybody, an older person and named O'Brien, but Ralph was the first to break the arm of it [?] and Loring, Harold Loring, of course Gerry Conley was city councilor after a while. I don't know, so anyway it changed, the city council of Portland has changed completely. It's probably changed back again now, but it's moved from an overwhelmingly Republican attitude to the more liberal Democratic group. I suppose it would be more, charter (*unintelligible word*) to say it was conservative and then it became liberal.

MR: And how about Milton Wheeler?

RK: Yeah, Milton was in the same office, or shared offices at least with Wally Campbell. And I've seen him, I think he's still alive, Milton's down in Florida. I've seen him within the last couple of years, but it could be more than them, it's hard to tell. He comes up in the summer. And, of course his wife, Milly Wheeler, Mildred, came into the legislature in the '60s for a while. She's died quite some time ago now. But Milton was a lawyer on Middle Street, he was down the corner from where I used to be, and can't (*unintelligible word*) I had any cases with him at all. Had a few things with Wally, most of all, Campbell, but Milt was a, in fact Milton was appointed to the municipal court in Portland when you still had municipal courts. He couldn't get confirmed; he was a Muskie appointment for that position there. I think they finally gave up on it and appointed Sid Wernick, Sid Wernick became municipal judge.

Sid Wernick is very top drawer, you know, not only very capable but everybody in the world speaks well of him. So that was, but Wernick really should have had that position; he was well qualified for it. It's just that the, of course we had a Republican council in those days, we used to have a confirming council, had the negative power to keep you from getting those seats and so (*unintelligible word*). I know, I'm quite sure that's how it was, they wouldn't confirm Milt, but when we appointed Wernick they really almost had to take him because he had so much influence. And that's how my associate Walter Murrow got to be the associate judge in Portland. He's a Republican and he was the kind of fellow that no one could say anything against either, so that's how it came out. Eventually, this would be, must be around '55 or so, I don't know what the time frame of it is, but it's, around in there. Anyway, Milt was very well qualified but didn't get that and so he kept on practicing. But he's retired a long ago now. As a matter of fact I think he was down in a federal job. I think he went with the Small Business Administration.

MR: And how about Jane Kilroy?

RK: Yeah, Jane was a legislator from Portland. She was up here, I say up here- up in Augusta, I think it was the '58 year (*unintelligible phrase*). She was in the house when I was there, very active, very active woman. I'm trying to think, I knew somebody- she had a couple boys, I knew she had children that I've seen around town. Well, one was a real estate operator, dealer. I think Jane was on the committee for aging or youth or something like that. She was quite active in committees such as that, and I'm, I get confused now whether it was, I think it was the aging committee. But, they didn't have that many committees in those days that did ongoing things like you do today, but very active lady, a very active lady and quite effective, quite effective.

MR: And someone else who was particularly active also and also involved with Muskie quite a bit, Dana Childs and Jean Childs?

RK: Oh, Dana, yeah, yeah, Dana and Jean, wonderful people. Dana died last spring, Dana was judge of probate for twenty years or so I guess. Dana was a Republican. He was the only Republican to get elected in 1956. He, they had seven seats in Portland and he had the, he got one and six Democrats. And, but oh, nice guy, Dana was a great fellow. He likes horses. And he died of a heart attack just suddenly at home, he had some trouble earlier, and angiograms [?]. I would think Dana probably be about seventy-five. It was just this last spring. I used to have lunch with him every Monday almost. But he bought a farm out in Westbrook, a long time ago now, and he and Jean liked to raise horses, you know, the sulky racing type horses. And he got appointed to the probate court by Ken Curtis I guess it was, there was a vacancy came up. That's an elective job, that's the only judge you vote for in the state is the probate judge, and he stayed there, so that would have been in the '60s. No, no it would have been the '70s, it would have been '72 or '3, something like that, so. But he had been in the legislature as a Republican and. . . . I was trying to think, I think he, he was running for attorney general back when the Republicans controlled the positions, and I'd say it was '58, and he missed out by one vote or something that one year, just one vote. He had been a Republican, and I don't know if that was enough to change his direction, but for whatever reason, (*unintelligible phrase*) because when he came back, he came back as a Democrat.

He used to live right down the street from me; he lived there for a long time. He used to run all the horses say race me, he has racing stables with the horses, so if you see a horse at the track, I don't do horse racing, I can't, I've never been into gambling, I never have enjoyed gambling at all. So. . . . But I'd go up to the Fryeburg Fair and he'd be in a horse racing. I've been up there a few times when he's won a race. Dana was an excellent person. Like I say he was judge of probate up until last year. In fact, he didn't run this last time, come to think of it, and so he was out of it for. . . . I go away all winter; I leave here in November and don't come back until the end of April.

MR: Do you go down south somewhere?

RK: Yeah, I go down to Myrtle Beach usually. I got, my children live out west, I have a child in Indianapolis; I go visit on the way down, and on the way back I have a youngster in California and one in Oregon I go visit. My wife is from Arkansas and Texas, her folks, they're pretty well all gone now, but I still have a sister-in-law in north Louisiana and one in Dallas, Texas.

MR: Actually, when did you meet your wife?

RK: I met her in school, when I was in school, law school. She went to Boston University from Little Rock, Arkansas. She come up on a scholarship of some kind, whatever they call it, they call it something in the medical field. But anyway she came up to Boston and then after that course was over with she went down, back to Little Rock, and a year or two later she came back, and I met her when she came back the next time. So she, she was working at the Children's Hospital. We got married in Boston. I was married in Park Street Church, right on the corner, in '52.

MR: And has your wife, oh, I'm sorry.

RK: My wife died four years ago now.

MR: Was she involved in politics much, or share your (*unintelligible phrase*)?

RK: Not really, except she was an exceptional woman as far as being the wife of someone who goes wandering off running for offices, very tolerant person and lovely girl. She's been gone four years and twenty-five days; she died in July, four years ago. She was very, very receptive to doing things you want to do and things like that. But we have three children and, like I say, they're all grown now in their forties.

MR: And what was your wife's name?

RK: Hazel. First name was actually Floye, F-L-O-Y-E, but her middle name was Hazel, and her maiden name was Shannon. She was a, she was born in Arkansas or someplace up around Lake County. I don't know. We don't have anyone living in Arkansas any more, any relatives of theirs, but they're, you know, they still (*tape stops abruptly, then resumes*). . . . they're all out in Dallas. That's where I got the papers, from visiting him in. I was on my way back from South Carolina, and I go and visit with him for a while, and I caught that article about Ed Muskie

in the column. It was about four years or three years ago? Something like that.

MR: Okay. And, also I've got a couple people to ask you about in connection with the labor unions. And first of all, maybe if you have some general impressions of how significant the labor unions have been maybe during the '60s, late '50s and '60s and early '70s when you were involved in politics.

RK: I don't think labor unions have ever been all that strong in Maine. I would say they have declined as far as (*unintelligible phrase*), but they still, you know, still very influential. Certainly the, I'm trying to think about anything specific. The thing about Maine, I think that people here in the state, the type of work we do, we're not so inclined for being in the union. But people who are have a strong feeling about it, and the people who are active in union management have considerable influence. The ones today, I don't really know. I can't think of who it would be. I know I had some connection with, what's his name, Dorsky, Ben Dorsky years ago, and there's one down our way with (*name*). But, I've never had that much direct contact with the labor people. But, I think it's a national thing about labor unions; they seem to be coming back some now. It's got to do mostly with the change of jobs, you know. When you get to a service economy, it doesn't lend itself as much to the union organizing as it does the factory type of work. You know, my impressions (*unintelligible word*) that, for whatever it's worth, that the actual influence. Most people make up their mind themselves. But they do have, the school unions have a lot of power it seems, you know, a lot of school teachers will go along with the education associat-

MR: (*Unintelligible phrase*).

RK: Yeah, they seem to go along quite well with the, I mean there's a lot of the things that I would think individuals, school teachers, might not be willing to go to the mat for, but they seem to, just the same. See, that's a different type of union than the paper workers, but they're still, it's the same format.

MR: And what was your connection with Ben Dorsky, you mentioned?

RK: Well, nothing except that I knew him and I served on a committee with him at least once or twice, I guess. I think he was on the, I'm trying to think. He's on, maybe on the reapportionment commission I was on one time. But I was with the, used to be on the New England Board of Higher Education, which is a New England compact. And I know he was on that, he was with that with me.

So I've served several times with him. Ben Dorsky was sort of umbrella group type of labor association. He was, I thought he was quite influential, quite influential, close to the vest. You wouldn't find out too much about what he was thinking one day to the next unless he would tell you about it. But he was, he was all right, I guess. And I didn't have much to do with the other union people.

MR: Did you know either David Hastings or Al Page? Did you get to have any connection with them?

RK: Yes, yes, yeah, I did. I know Hastings, and I can picture him. Let's see, I can't remember what the union, what it was, who he was with now, but I knew him. Al Page I think was the, Al Page was down our way, I know that, I can picture him too. What was the association he was with?

MR: Yeah, I do have the information, actually.

RK: Oh that's alright, you don't have to. . . . But anyway, I do remember them, yes, but it would be. . . . They were southern Maine people; they were out of the Portland area. And I can remember Page, and I remember Hastings. I can picture Hastings, both of them. But any ideas I had would be more peripheral, you know, just the fact that I'm one of the crowd and they're there, that type of thing.

The union was kind of important with the politicians in the sense that, not so much that, whether you're real friendly with them but don't get them mad at you, that type of thing. I think like in the printing trade, you always buy publicity literature that's got the union label on it, even though there may be only one label, one union man there, but it's got to do with sort of a preventive type of thing. I know I used to, the one union shop that I knew in Portland, I had my political ads done and that was a nice guy anyway. I would have gone to him anyway for that matter, but I know he was the only, I think he was the only one that did the bumper stickers and things. He put the, his little mark, he put on the union name, you know, which is kind of important when you're running for office, too. Not to offend anybody.

MR: Okay, and also just a few people kind of at the state politics level that maybe you got to know through the legislature. First of all, we touched upon Governor Clinton Clauson? What was he like to work with in the house?

RK: Clauson was a very capable fellow, very well liked, very likable person. He had been the internal revenue director; we used to call it collective internal revenue before they decided to call it the internal revenue service. It's still just as bad as collective but they fancied up the name. Instead of making it better, they made the name different. But he was the collector; he was a chiropractor by trade, and he, awful nice guy. And like I say, he was governor at a time when money was awful hard to come by, very difficult to do much except keep the ship afloat. And quite a businessman, good businessman. He had, I'm trying to think of who the administrative assistant was, there was Maurice, Maury- Maury something.

MR: Is it Maury Williams?

RK: Maury Williams, yes. But Clauson was an expert at ducking you off against somebody else. You know, if you're going to be disappointed, you're not going to be disappointed with him, you're going to be disappointed with Maury Williams. And I admired him for it. I thought he was a great guy. But he was- Clauson was an awful nice man; he was so good when he got elected. And then of course his not living really hurt us terribly because if he of course he'd lived. He died just under a year and (*unintelligible phrase*) because he had served, of course, he'd have been there during reapportionment for one thing, which would have been a good thing

for us, but yeah, I liked Clauson very much. He was from Waterville, I had met him before, and he, I'm quite sure he ran against, isn't that awful, I can't seem to remember the. . . . No, I was thinking Maynard Dolloff was going to run that year but didn't. I think that's what it was I was thinking. Clauson was, I'm trying to think of who the primary problems were but I think, I can't remember now. Dick Dubord ran in the primary at the time, Dubord was, I don't know if you've got him on your list or not, but Dick was a very, very capable person, very capable. An attorney, and he lost the primary to Maynard Dolloff in '62. So, those were tough times for us then.

MR: And how about, how was Governor Reed- I'm not sure how much interaction you had with him- but what were your impressions of him following Clauson?

RK: Reed was, of course we were very disappointed (*unintelligible phrase*). Reed was very easy to get along with. He was, you see, I was in the legislature when he was the senate president. I was in the house, but I at least had some contact with him. Reed was more of a fellow that just would go along. He wouldn't get, wouldn't make too many enemies, I don't think, he was not too big a doer I wouldn't think. But of course he was Republican so, I mean, you got to figure where he was coming from.

But he was an agreeable type person, and, in that sense, he was flexible. I guess Reed, overall was fairly quite successful as governor. Of course he was governor for a long time, seven years.

The most- the oddest thing of course was when he beat Frank Coffin. Coffin was probably the most capable person we ever had run, you know, Coffin and Muskie were the Democratic Party really. And so, and I think Coffin still got the second largest vote in the state for governor. That was a huge vote. You couldn't believe how they couldn't see it; they used to transport people to the polls in Portland. And in 1960; that election day, you couldn't take people to the polls and bring them back. It took two hours to get into the polling place, and people standing in that line right around the block. And, you know, they were either fanatically for Kennedy or fanatically against him. And, I know we was taking people, you know, you used to transport those people, it got so that after the polls opened you could see that you couldn't take people there and wait for them to come home, you'd be sitting there all day long waiting for one person. So we developed a system of sort of flagging people down, we'd just say, "I'm going to drop you off at the polling place and if you see this car go by with a sign on it, you flag them down; they'll take you back home again."

There was a tremendous vote, and so of course Reed won, he, which was; I think that was the biggest surprise to the Republicans as anybody, that he won over Coffin. But a lot of the votes, I don't keep track of those statistics, but I wouldn't be a bit surprised today if that was still the biggest vote ever and if the losing candidate, Coffin, was the next biggest vote ever.

So, but Reed would be, but, you know, he was not bad, he was all right. He was just, I don't think, he wasn't too much of a doer but he wasn't a don't-er either. He did all right (*unintelligible phrase*).

MR: Speaking of Frank Coffin, how well did you get to know him, maybe in the mid '50s Democratic resurgence or later on?

RK: Coffin practiced law in Portland with Verrill & Dana, and I'd seen him in the courthouse quite a few times; excellent lawyer, excellent lawyer, trial lawyer. And then, of course, he became a congressman and so, not too much for, you know, face-to-face dealings or anything but very, very capable person. Coffin really is outstanding. Coffin would make an excellent Supreme Court judge; he was just probably one of the most gifted intellectual type people ever. I don't know, Coffin might be dead, but I don't know if he's dead or not, he was alive not too long ago.

MR: He's still alive actually, yeah, he's still.

RK: He was alive not long ago. Of course he was on the first circuit, you know, for quite a long time, and I'm not sure whether he's, the federal court system is such that you stay forever, you know, as a, I'm trying to think what the expression is, but I think after retirement type of thing.

MR: (*Unintelligible phrase*), I think that's what it is.

RK: You sort of go into abeyance, but you can still be called upon, and he was an excellent judge. Of course I never saw him again once he was on that big court, but he was very capable. But the Democratic Party in the '50s, owed the resurrection of the party to Ed Muskie and Frank Coffin, no question about it. The rest of the people would never have gotten off the ground. You had the Democratic areas, Lewiston would always vote legislators. . . .

End of Side B, Tape One
Side A, Tape Two

MR: This is the second tape of the interview with Ronald Kellam on August 24th, 1999. And we were talking a little bit about Frank Coffin on the last tape. Is there anything else that you wanted to add?

RK: Oh, I can't think so, I can't- it's just that I'm tremendously impressed with him, I was right from the beginning. I had seen him in the courtroom, you know, before he ever got into politics, and I was very impressed with him.

MR: Okay, and a couple of governors I wanted to ask you about also. Governor Ken Curtis, you worked with when you were in the state senate. What was he like?

RK: Well, Ken was a, I thought one of the best politicians ever. He was, Curtis was in law school in Portland when I was prac-, when I started to practice, and he, he helped a lot in the election, I guess it must have been '58 election, and then he went to work with Jim Oliver. Jim Oliver was a congressman, and after a couple years. . . . Oliver would have lost in 1960 and Curtis was with the federal, a federal program, I'm not quite sure (*unintelligible phrase*), but it was, anyway, a development type program.

Then he, I think he ran for congress one time, but then became governor, he ran for governor, he,

oh no. When the legislature took over in '64, when we, the Democrats captured the legislature, he had run I guess that year and he became secretary of state. See, so I knew Curtis back when he was active, just active in politics in the Portland area when he was still in school. But the thing about Ken Curtis is he's the kind of fellow that if you meet him face to face, you've gonna vote for him. He can turn, one of the best politicians I ever saw face-to-face. I always thought if he could shake hands with everybody in the state he'd have every vote, every vote, or just about. He was a great person on influencing people in face-to-face meetings. So anyway, then he became governor; I thought he did an excellent job as governor. Curtis advocated the income tax and got away with it, he got reelected just the same, which is unusual. I like Ken Curtis very much. And he was in the, he was governor when I was in the state senate. At least he, yeah, I guess he was governor both terms I was in the state senate, yeah.

MR: I think it was, '67 to '75. . . .

RK: Yeah, he was '6-, must have been the '66 election up to '74. Then after him came Longley, Jim Longley followed him, and then Brennan.

MR: And did you have many dealings or an opportunity to get to know closely either Longley or Brennan?

RK: Not Longley too much. I talked with him a few times. Longley was quite a fellow; he was an interesting person. I was on the court when Longley became governor, and he took quite an interest in the court system. He used to you know, write once in a while and say he was interested in something. And of course the drawback to that is it, I don't think it looks good for the governor to try to influence judges either, but on the other hand anything of a general nature was fine.

So I didn't, well, I knew him in the sense of, Longley got his start, of course, from Curtis; Curtis put him on a committee to study the administration of something. It was the darndest name, the name of the committee was, which you probably can find out what it was someplace, but I always said he became mostly a success because he could say that name without stuttering he had the beat and. . . . But he was on this committee to study, and of course Longley was quite a successful insurance person here in Lewiston and he was, he did a very good job.

I was quite close to Curtis all the time he was governor. What you didn't ask me about was Allen Pease, who used to be his administrative assistant. Allen Pease is one of the greatest guys in the world, and bright, bright, bright fellow. And so, I did a lot of work with him on the, mostly in school subsidies, the public school system. Subsidies- school subsidies is one of the biggest items there is, probably still is. It's got to be because it's such a big part of local budgets, school systems are. And the amount of money that the state can give to a school is really so important to them. But Allen Pease was an excellent mathematician and political theorist, he was a bright fellow. So I did a lot of work with him, and that and the reapportionment, we were doing the reapportionment then. And of course you try to come out with a fair districting (it would be people's own thought of what's fair), but generally you want to have it somewhat fair, but you don't want to give up too much either. You don't want to lose all the elections just because you got some weird looking seat that favors the other side.

But, I did quite a bit of work with Curtis on the- and as I say, I had known him before. And Allen Pease is a good friend of mine, Allen Pease is still around, down in Buxton now area. He's quite a bright fellow. He's been retired a long time, he's getting old.

MR: And also, how about Governor Joe Brennan, have you gotten to know him, work with him?

RK: Yeah, oh yeah, Joe is, I first met Joe when he was, started to practice law and I think he was, had an office right next to Cappy Tevanian, Casper, always called him Cappy. But anyway, he was in that same building. And I did a few things with him at one time or another, and quite- quite capable lawyer. And very good, he was an excellent governor; I thought Brennan did one of the best jobs ever as governor. But, you see, the times were such that there was, you were able to do things. You take, like say when Clauson was governor, the best thing you could do was keep the store open, you just didn't; there was nothing to work with. Curtis was better off, but Curtis made his own, by getting the income tax passed, made the wherewithal to do things.

I thought Joe Brennan was an excellent manager of the state. I don't see Joe much any more, but I used to then. We used to drive back and forth together, he and Gerry Conley and I, when he was in the house, he was in the legisla-, in the house in, I don't know, '68 I guess, '70. I know he was in, he was in the leadership position in the house at that time. He used to live on the next street from mine, he lived on Craggie Street and I lived on (*name*) Street. But when we were driving up and, back and forth sometimes, we'd drive together, quite often.

Joe's a very serious person, I think, he's very, very capable. But see, he's more introverted. I don't know if you've ever met Joe, but at least to my way of thinking. I've heard people say they thought he was kind of cool or something, I said, "No, he's not cool at all. It's just that he's, he's almost somewhat shy." But Ken Curtis was just the opposite, Ken Curtis would, he'd light up the room every time he'd come anywhere. He was a great vote getter, and he was very capable. But I thought, I would say if you're ranking people, that Brennan probably did as well a job of management, of running the state, as anyone around.

MR: And how about Peter Kyros, Sr., he was a congressman?

RK: I haven't seen Peter for a long time. Peter is, of course he was in congress and stayed down in Washington, far as I know. I was never very close to Peter, I never had much. . . . Of course, he's a lawyer, and he was, in fact he was a lawyer for the Public Utilities Commission I think, when I first came up here. And, but he, that was a partial position. And he had an office in Portland, and of course eventually he ran for congress and then he was in congress for, must have been about four terms I think, I'm not too sure of that either. And, I think he lost out to Dave Emery. He, far as know, I think he has stayed right in Washington. Of course, a lot of the people that go to Washington, they become known so much to people there and unknown to people back home that if you're going to go back to practice law, you got a better chance being where you're known, I think that's common sense. So, far as I know, I haven't seen him since, certainly not since he was a congressman. I can't remember seeing him since then.

MR: Well, I think that's all my questions, so is there anything else that you'd like to add about your time as a lawyer, or judge, or legislator or anything about your life or political involvement you'd like to (*unintelligible phrase*)?

RK: Well, I don't regret anything, that's for sure. I've not always been satisfied with the way it went, but, you know, could have done better at times. But I mean, the way it is in politics you can only have one winner and so you (*unintelligible phrase*). But I've had a very good life with politics. I enjoyed this, you know, you always want to feel that you made a difference at all it was to the good, so, and so I don't feel badly, I feel quite satisfied about the way it's gone, and the people I've met.

You meet a lot of people that are really very enjoyable, and of course some others that you're glad to forget, I guess, but not too many, not too many. Most of them are quite, even the ones that, the ones that you thought were so damn wrong twenty years ago, after a while, well, there might be some (*unintelligible word*) to that after all, you know, you adjust your thinking a little bit as you age, I know all the things you have in the, you get so wrapped up in a legislative bill, you think, I don't know how that guy can ever think that way. But then again, there is a reason for it.

So we had, always appreciated it, and you think in reference to like Ed Muskie; I always thought that he was one of the high points. I've never met a soul that didn't speak well of Ed Muskie. And I don't think it was just because they were talking to me. I can't recall anyone who didn't think well of him, though I suppose there must be somebody somewhere under some rock some place, but I don't know where he is, I haven't met him. And he always kept- he just presented himself very well everywhere. I thought he went out of his way to be awful good to the Democrats back when we took a real beating. We took a real shellacking in 1960. And he had four more years, you know, he didn't have to run again, but he was up here. Soon as that legislature came into session he was here to help such as he could, you know, the organization of it. I know he had quite an influence on the minority leader at that time, who would be the leader, who would be able to present himself fairly well, because we took quite a beating.

And then, the sad part about politics is that many times the very best people are in the more marginal seats, they're the ones you lose. And the person who is in the real safe seat might not be the best qualified over all. So I thought he did an excellent job, I mean, because I can remember him coming up, we had dinner, and try to salvage as much as we could in 1960, and of course it took a couple of years before we got back up to normal again, or that I consider normal. But it was nice talking to you.

MR: It was great that you could do this. Thanks very much.

RK: You're certainly welcome.

End of Interview